

February 27, 2023

### **Testimony in Opposition to the Following Bills**

**Opposition to HB 6780- An act concerning tenants' rights.**

**Opposition to HB 6781- An act addressing affordability for residents in the state.**

**Opposition to SB 4-An act concerning Connecticut's present and future housing needs.**

Dear Members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Neil Godfrey, and I am the CEO of CBG Real Estate, LLC, which is a small to medium sized owner and manager of apartment properties in central CT.

I oppose bills 6780, 6781 and SB 4

There are many reasons why these bills are both counterproductive and fail to meet their statements of purpose. According to Governor Lamont, CT is "desperately short of housing". The provisions contained in these bills exacerbate that problem. The actual consequences of these bills is that they do not create housing, they infringe on the rights of the majority of tenants, they reduce the availability of housing for lower income households, and they worsen the future of Connecticut's housing needs.

Bill 6781 states its intent is to "improve access to adequate housing for all residents". It does not accomplish this at all.

Its opening section is to impose civil penalties up to \$2000 on Landlords without proving negligence or even fault. This is problematic on many levels. If, for example, and this happens all the time, a tenant hires movers that break building components such as security lighting, or safety bannisters, then the Landlord will now be liable for the damages and a \$2000 fine. The damages caused by tenants' contractors, or invitees, will become the landlord's liability, since this event is not exempted for appeal in the bill. A civil penalty should only be applied if the Landlord is proven to be at fault or negligent. This is but one fundamental failure of this bill. Furthermore, none of this section improves access to adequate housing as the bill claims as its intent.

The bill also seeks to eliminate "lapse of time" or other "no cause" evictions. This is also harmful to the majority of tenants seeking quiet enjoyment. Examples of this problem are women and children being routinely exposed to vile behavior by neighboring tenants. Some tenants regrettably fall into behaviors such as public urination, swearing, smoking of marijuana so as to contaminate the entire building, excessive trash, noise, or even banging on doors at night. Attempting to evict for nuisance by the Landlord without tenant testimony, which is impossible to obtain, due to fear of retaliation and or work obligations, will not be successful. Tenants routinely demand that Landlords remove problem tenants. In a building with 24 tenants, one tenant will have the right to ruin the quiet enjoyment of 23 others. This is a grave injustice to mothers and children, not to mention the majority of others in the building.

**The voices of these people are not being heard, and their rights are being disrespected by the problem tenants. Without this eviction right, the rights of the majority will be sacrificed for the right of the abusive tenant. The Landlord requires this right in order to protect the others in the building.**

Bill 6780 also contains the no fault eviction language and other objectionable ideas. This bill and that language needs be opposed for the reasons stated above.

**Bill SB4 is another bill which will create more problems.** One of its provisions is to impose rent caps. Research has shown that rent caps hurt cities and housing. The following are proven reasons why:

1. Rent caps are a disincentive to create housing, which is the fundamental issue facing CT at this time.
2. Rent caps cause the deterioration of existing housing.
3. Rent caps decrease tax revenues for towns and cities.
4. Rent caps eliminate housing choices for 3 out of 4 tenants.
5. Rent caps do not create jobs and force employers to look outside of CT.
6. Rent caps hurt lower income the most because they are screened out for higher income tenants.
7. Rent caps are not fair or reasonable to Landlords that incur tax/utility cost increases.

In addition, this bill seeks to prevent notices to quit from 12/1-3/1 of any year. This will create a firestorm of tenant misbehavior and lack of accountability leading up to, and during this time. It is extremely problematic to impose a temporary restriction, only to have it removed months later. This will result in a massive increase in evictions due to tenants violating their agreements, only to have it enforced months later. This temporary reprieve of the law has no place in housing matters, or anywhere else. For example, It would not be acceptable to restrict prosecutions for theft from 12/1-3/1.

**The answer to the problem is to increase the supply of housing. Nothing else solves the problem.**

These bills do more harm than good. The people who are unrepresented in this matter are employers who hope to have employees that can find housing, and the poor, who are prevented from even getting housing because it is in short supply. Instead of providing incentives to create or improve housing, Landlords are faced with penalties for providing housing. This is backwards and how we arrived at the shortage of housing we face today. Let's not make the problem worse.

**Solutions to the issues being raised include: Increasing housing vouchers, providing phased in tax abatements, creating enterprise zones, and making state and city land available for the creation of additional housing. We need to provide incentives to housing providers so capital, investment – and jobs- come pouring in to the state. In addition, the state can begin to immediately create public/private partnerships, or purchase property on its own and take on these responsibilities. There are numerous developers and builders with shovel ready projects. The implementation of these solutions will actually deliver results quicker and more permanently than the proposed legislation.**

Respectfully submitted,

